



# THE BRAILLE MONITOR

Voice of the  
National Federation of the Blind

OCTOBER - 1972

The National Federation of the Blind is not an organization speaking for the blind—it is the blind speaking for themselves.

## THE BRAILLE MONITOR

Published monthly in inkprint, Braille, and on talking book discs  
Distributed free to the blind by the National Federation of the Blind  
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If you or a friend wish to remember the National Federation of the Blind in your will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND, a District of Columbia non-profit corporation, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or, "\_\_\_\_\_ percent of my net estate", or "the following stocks and bonds: \_\_\_\_\_") to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons and to be held and administered by direction of its Executive Committee."


If your wishes are more complex, you may have your attorney communicate with the Berkeley Office for other suggested forms.

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Printed at 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley, California 94708

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## BLIND ARE BEING KEPT IN THE DARK

[Editor's Note: Following are a series of stories reprinted by courtesy of the *Minneapolis Daily American* which detail the problems which the organized blind of Minnesota are having with the Minneapolis Society for the Blind.]

### CHARITY GROUP REFUSES TO TALK

*Blind Are Being  
Kept in the Dark*

#### *President of Non-Profit Blind Society Given Whopping Contract*

[*Minneapolis Daily American* June 2, 1972]

The Minneapolis Society for the Blind has refused to answer questions regarding bids on a federally assisted construction project.

The questions arose when the *Daily American* learned that Richard Johnstone, president of the Society, also is president of the South Side Plumbing and Heating Company, which has the mechanical contract on the project.

The Minneapolis Society for the Blind—a United Fund agency, is a charitable organization chartered by the State of Minnesota as a non-profit corporation.

It receives funds from the Hennepin County Welfare Board, the State of Minnesota, the federal government and the United Fund as well as other private donations.

The Society is constructing an addition to its workshop at 1936 Lyndale Ave. S. The total cost of the project could not be obtained from the Society.

Frank Johnson, executive director of the Society, told the D.A. that the building would cost "about \$800,000." However, he would not divulge details of the contracts or of the bidding.

Frank A. Church, a U.S. official in the Chicago office of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare said that "special problems" are raised if a member of the board bids on such a contract.

"Bids are always supposed to be open and competitive," he said. "In cases like this, the board should take special efforts to make sure that the bidding is open and competitive, and that the bids are opened in an open meeting."

Johnson said that the bids were opened "late in October" of last year. He said that the board of directors did not open the bids, but "delegated that responsibility to the building committee."

Johnstone, whose firm got the mechanical contract, is chairman of that building committee as well as president of the Society for the Blind.

Johnson refused to tell the *Daily American* where and when the bids were opened, or if that meeting was open. He hung up the telephone when the reporter persisted in asking for more information.

President Johnstone of the Society refused to say who was involved for the Society in handling the project or in the bidding.

Stanley Potter, director of the State Services for the Blind, said that Johnstone, former president James H. Grenell, and Frank Johnson were active in working with state officials to get a commitment of up to \$372,000 in federal funds for the addition.

Potter said that \$225,000 already is allocated. The grant is on a matching basis, with the federal government putting up 45 percent and the Society putting up the rest.

He said that the original request to the state was for \$960,000. Of that, \$133,000 was disallowed because it was for site acquisition.

Frank Johnson was asked by the D.A. to supply the current list of directors and a copy of the report of the Society's finances which is required to be filed with the state.

He did not supply either piece of information.

Neither the United Fund, the Hennepin County Welfare Board, nor the State Services for the Blind has a copy of the list of directors. The list was supplied by a blind man whose membership application in the Society was denied.

President Johnstone said that about \$100,000 still remains to be raised to complete the addition.

The architect for the project is the firm of Hills, Gilbertson and Fisher, Inc. The firm said it had no connection with the Society, other than drawing the plans.

The general contractor for the

addition is Ernest M. Ganley Co., Inc. The firm said it had no other connection with the Society.

A spokesman for the Ganley Co., said that the electrical and mechanical contracts held by Johnstone's company were completely separate, and he did not have any information on those costs.

Sterling Electric Co. has the electrical contract.

The Society has been under attack by various organizations representing blind people in Minnesota because of the Society's alleged secrecy, "paternalistic and oppressive attitude," and failure to allow representatives elected by the blind to serve on the board of the Society.

Mike Nestor of the United Fund confirmed that one of the requirements for participating charitable institutions to stay in the United Fund is for such institutions to make "continuing efforts to involve the persons it serves in policy-making decisions."

Joyce Hoffa, publicity director of The National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota, said that the Society has consistently excluded blind people who want to serve from its board.

"There is a certain amount of tokenism on the board of the Society," said Miss Hoffa, a former English teacher who holds a master of arts degree. "But we've been trying for two years to get someone on the board who really represents the blind."

She said that there are a few blind people on the board, but that most of

them have been added within the last year, and none of them are served by the programs of the Society.

"Only one member of the board ever has condescended to show up at blind organization meetings when we've asked them to," said Miss Hoffa, "and she was a newly-appointed member who said she didn't know who else was on the board."

She said the blind groups contend that, since the Society is using state and federal funds, the blind should have representation on the board elected by the blind themselves.

Besides the U.S. grant for the addition, the state pays the Society about \$180,000 a year for training the blind in vocational work. Another large part of the Society's operations are manufacturing sub-contracts secured under federal subsidy.

The United Fund allocated \$117,000 to the Society last year.

Joe Virden, chairman of the legislative committee of the Federation of the Blind, said, that when his group began pressing the Society to add members elected by the blind, the Society "expelled 2,000 members."

He explained that before this year, a donation of \$1 gave a contributor membership in the Society, with the right to vote at the annual meeting in January.

"We had the blind take out memberships, so they could have a vote at the general meeting," he said. "But the board of the Society changed their membership setup so that only the board

could vote."

He said that this violates the United Fund requirements, which provide that any changes in dues, membership status and so on must be cleared by the United Fund.

"But when we inquired about it at the United Fund, we got a letter saying that the matter had been referred to Frank Johnson, executive director of the Society," he said.

The Society operates a Sheltered Work Shop for the blind, contracts with the state to provide certain training and rehabilitation services and works with the county on some services, and provides charitable social services for the blind.

The State Director for Services to the Blind said that in areas which the state provides tuition money, that the Society "is the only one in the state which is doing these things." These are the Rehabilitation Center, the Occupational Treatment and Training Programs, and the Community Services Programs--this last mainly for shut-ins.

"The blind are fed up with being treated as mental incompetents," said Miss Hoffa. "We think we deserve some representation on the board. As things are, they won't even listen to us."

Besides Richard Johnstone, president, and Frank Johnson, executive director, the officers of the Society include Robert L. Nash, chairman of the board; Mrs. J. G. Atwood, executive vice-president; Mrs. Roger W. Buckholtz, secretary; and William Stephens, treasurer.

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## EDINA ATTEMPTS TO OUTLAW BLIND PICKETS

### *Blind Wonder About Jail Facilities*

[*Minneapolis Daily American* June 17, 1972]

The Village of Edina is moving to protect itself against the blind people of Minnesota.

Shocked by the picketing of the homes of four persons by a group of blind people, the Village Council has asked the Village manager to draw up an ordinance to prohibit such extremist actions.

A group of 18 persons from the National Federation of the Blind in Minnesota recently picketed the homes of four officers of the Minneapolis Society for the Blind.

The Society for the Blind is a charitable non-profit group which has been under fire by blind people in Minneapolis. The blind say they are effectively blocked from participating in the operation of the Society. They also charge (*Daily American*, June 2 and June 9) that there is conflict of interest among the officers of the Society.

The four officers who were picketed, are Richard Johnstone—president, 4928 Poppy Lane; John M. Nash, vice president, 6101 Code Ave.; Mrs. Roger W. Buckholtz, secretary, 5832 Grove and Mrs. Herman L. Gross, 5708 Hawkes Ter.

A spokesman for the blind people said that the picketing was orderly and not offensive.

"We called the police department

first to get the ground rules," said Joyce Hoffa, a vice president of the Blind Federation.

"Our signs were to the point of our dispute with the Society and we created no disturbance."

She said that the Edina police showed up outside the home of Mrs. Buckholtz and stayed with them the rest of the way.

"We plan to picket again next Monday," said Miss Hoffa.

"If they have passed their ordinance by that time, I guess they'll just have to throw us in jail."

Michael Bolen, attorney for the Minneapolis Society for the Blind, said that he had asked the council for the ordinance.

"I believe in freedom of speech and expression," said Bolen, who lives at 5207 Doncaster Way in Edina, "But there should be reasonable limitations placed on the exercise of those rights."

He said that the law does limit the location and time of the expression.

"For instance, the right to picket before a court house during a trial might limit the right to a free trial," he said. "And to engage in free speech at 2 a.m. is not appropriate when it disturbs others."

Bolen said also that the right to privacy also has been upheld by the courts.

"A person can stop pornographic



material coming to his home," he said, "or prevent harassment over the telephone."

The office of Village Manager Warren C. Hyde said that the ordinance probably will come before the council Monday, June 19, and that it may be passed that day without a second hearing if 4 of the 5 councilmen so vote.

Councilman Richard Johnson said that it was his impression that the ordinance will limit picketing which is not related to a legitimate labor dispute. Johnson made the motion asking the manager to prepare the ordinance.

Miss Hoffa, a former teacher who is blind, conceded that the Village of Edina outnumbered both the Federation, which has about 500 members, and the blind in Minnesota, estimated at 7,000.

"I guess you could say also that they have more financial resources than the blind," she said. "Few blind persons have annual incomes over \$3,000. I'm told that property taxes alone in Edina run over the \$3,000 figure."

She added that it might be interesting to see what lock-up facilities the Village of Edina provides for the blind.

Police Detective Blood of the Edina department told the Daily American that the Village only has three cells to hold six persons.

"Our lock-up is just designed as a short-term thing," he said. "We have the three cells, sanitary and shower facilities and food available. But we usually transfer prisoners to the county jail as soon as possible, because the facilities are better

there."

Bolen had charged in his chat with the Edina Council that the National Federation of the Blind "only want to get their hands on the Society's \$4-million in assets."

He told the D.A. that he just "picked that figure out of the air," and that it may not be accurate. "We declare some-what less for book purposes," he said.

(The Society listed its assets on Dec. 31, 1970 as \$1,992,624.)

Miss Hoffa said that the Federation has no intention of "getting our hands on the assets" of the Society.

"Basically, we think that one third of the board members should be people who represent the blind," she said. "I do confess that we'd like to find out how they have their funds invested."

Bolen maintained that Edinans have the right to tranquility in their homes.

"Look," he said, "the wife of one of the board members is pregnant. I'm sure she would get most upset if her husband were out of town and a hundred people were out in front, creating a hubbub."

He said that when the blind went to the homes, they went not to convince but to harass.

"How can you convince when you can't talk to someone?" asked Miss Hoffa. "None of those board members ever have appeared at a meeting and talked with us. We thought that we were fighting an entrenched, hereditary oligarchy on the

board. Now we're fighting the Village of Edina too.

"We have nothing against Edina. I know some people from Edina, and they are good and bad, just like any other group of people. If someone from Edina applied for membership in our group, we'd judge him just like anyone else. I just hope our younger members don't get a stereo-typed view of people in Edina. Those people out there are very good in sports, for example, and I'm told that there are a lot of good musicians among them.

"Just because we have a quarrel with a few of their prominent citizens doesn't mean we hate all Edinans."

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*At Society for the Blind:*

IGNORANT OF THE LAW

*Lawyer Will Poll  
for Possible Conflicts*

[*Minneapolis Daily American*, June 24, 1972]

The attorney for the Minneapolis Society for the Blind admitted this week that some members of the board of the Society may have "possible" conflicts of interest which should be listed on the charity's annual statement filed with the state.

"I'm just not familiar with the provisions for this kind of disclosure," said Michael Bolen, the Society's attorney "We might have to poll the members of the board to find out if there are conflicts

of interest which we should disclose on the forms we file with the State Commerce Dept."

Two members of the National Federation of the Blind in Minn. have said that Bolen and others should have been listed on the statements filed last year.

Bolen said that until the situation was revealed in the *Daily American* two weeks ago he "hadn't even heard" of the disclosure provisions. "I've looked up the law which you (the D.A.) cite, and it doesn't mention conflict of interest" he said. "But it's entirely possible that it's covered under general laws regulating non-profit corporations."

Joyce Hoffa, vice president of the Federation, said that Bolen should have been listed on the statement, since his wife is on the board of the Society, and the state asks that conflicts involving the immediate family of board members should be listed

She also said that since Honeywell does business with the Society (with contracts at its Sheltered Workshop) the executives from Honeywell who are on the Society's board should be listed.

"And what about stocks and bonds in Honeywell?" asked Miss Hoffa. "If the Society holds any of those, they should be listed on the report to the State of Minnesota."

Bolen said that he "simply didn't know" if the Society holds any Honeywell stocks. The Society reported \$834,406 in marketable securities held by the Society last year.

"The investment committee periodically reviews the portfolio," he said. "It is held in a bank trust department, and I don't know what's in the portfolio."

Miss Hoffa said that it's "ridiculous" that the Society doesn't know whether conflicts of interest exist. "Most of the board members have been there for many years," she said. "If they don't know enough about it to comply with state requirements, they shouldn't be there. And they can't put the blame on their hired help. The board is responsible for the conduct of the Society. This just points up the need for reform."

Some organizations of the blind in Minnesota have been demanding that they be given the right to elect one third of the members of the board of the Society for the Blind, which receives large amounts of funds from the county, state and national government.

Bolen and other members of the board of the Society contend that the National Federation of the Blind in Minnesota simply wants to "control or destroy" the Society.

He told the Edina Village Council a couple of weeks ago that the Federation "just wants to get its hands on the Society's \$4 million in assets."

The charge came after Federation members picketed at homes of the board of directors of the Society who live in Edina. Bolen asked Edina for an ordinance prohibiting such picketing.

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LIBRARY SERVICES  
IN NEW MEXICO  
by  
Florence Grannis

[Editor's Note: The following remarks were delivered by Mrs. Florence Grannis, Assistant Director in Charge of Library and Social Services for the Iowa Commission for the Blind, at the Convention of the New Mexico affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind, Sunday, May 28, 1972.]

Our national president, Mr. Jernigan, says that while philosophy bakes no bread, without a philosophy no bread is baked. The philosophy behind a library for the blind is fundamental. Do the people directing and supporting the library *believe* and with conviction—that blind people can be *competing, regular* members of society, or do they believe that there is truly no point in supplying anything but leisure reading—that by-in-large blind people will have nothing but leisure?

If you as library director believe that your public needs books to educate themselves, to provide employment resource data, to give facts for presentation before professional and recreational organizations (as well as books for fun), you will provide one type of staff, one type of system, one type of budget, one type of attitude toward their library. If you believe your public only needs books to console themselves and to while away the empty hours, all these will be different. Believing that blind people can be contributing members of society, you will hire the best librarian you can get, house her (or him) in the most efficient way *with* her library, give her the most staff possible, the most possible

space and money and let her devote all her time to this service which *you recognize as vital*.

If you as library director believe blind people are responsible citizens who will need books and related materials, you will establish a system that will let you know who has which books and when they got them—will give you a method of book control and recall. You will fund so that non-available materials can be produced on request and frequently requests can be anticipated. Your attitude will be that these *responsible taxpayers* should have the best library service the community has to offer.

What is the New Mexico situation? What can we see revealed about the philosophy of the director of the New Mexico State Library, of which your library is a part? Your Librarian for the Blind, Noel Ross, is competent, but she is responsible for providing library services to institutions and to elderly people and she is responsible for training regional library workers. Her time with the library for the blind cannot be more than minimal and her office is not even on the same floor with your library. The system? The staff has no method of knowing which books are available except by looking on the shelf. This is a waste of precious time which might be spent sending out books. There is no way of knowing which books are where when they are in circulation, or which books anyone has or even how many books anyone has. There is no way of sending overdue notices and many of the books have completely disappeared from the library (presumably some people are establishing their own home libraries, but who can tell?).

The book “selector” tries to listen to the talking books all the while as he walks among the shelves seeing what might be sent out. Why? So he can screen out the “dirty” books from the readers. I know this because he told me so. That term book “selector” I’ve met only in libraries for the blind. Public libraries speak of reader’s advisers—do sighted people need advisers and blind people selectors?

An attitude of hopelessness pervades the staff. They feel overworked, underpaid, understated, and unappreciated. They are good guys and *want* to serve the blind but without direction and without hope—what can they do?

The State Library Director won’t allocate money for the Braille transcription program so the people of the Braille Service of New Mexico (volunteer Braillists) work for a library in another state. The taping program is really nothing with no leadership, no inspiration, no equipment—only apathy.

While the staff feels overworked and makes no effort to keep track of where the books or talking book machines are located, it is questionable whether they use their time to good advantage—typing each address card instead of using an addressing machine, having a dual borrower registration system, having letters handwritten and copied by the typist.

The clerk in charge—good guy that he is—doesn’t have the know-how to do reference work, bibliographic search, make book lists or perform the other tasks which convert a collection of books to a library.

You know you don't have a good library. I have told you why it isn't good--can I tell you how to make it better? I'll try to give a few suggestions.

Form a small but forceful library committee from among your members and prepare a plan. Decide what you want your library to be (I might remind you that my concept of what a library for the blind should be was set forth in the October 1971 issue of the *Braille Monitor*), decide what it would cost to fund the library as you would like it to be. Go to the State Library Director and the State Library Board and present your plan. Present your plan to the Governor and to your State Legislature. Ask for a *full-time librarian* to serve you. Ask for a system based on a philosophy that blind people are intelligent, responsible citizens who need the same library service they would need if they were not blind. Ask for funding so that material wanted and needed and not otherwise available can be transcribed--so that the volunteers, so essential in a good program for the blind, can have the tender loving direction and nurture they require. Ask for the caliber of staff who can do reference work. When I was in your library, for instance, I saw the good guy clerk in charge had no idea how to answer a question on the development of Braille. Ask for people who can prepare book lists, can develop a well-rounded collection which will be a source of knowledge, stimulation, comfort and delight, can anticipate what readers might want, can function as reader's *advisers*, not selectors! Give your library feedback! The staff told me they had few complaints. Write, phone, go to the library. Don't say the service is bad--say what you want--how to make it good.

Part of what you can do involves the library for the blind on the national level. Mr. Bray, Chief, Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, said at a recent conference of regional libraries that in 1978 the number of talking book titles produced each year would drop from the inadequate 700 of 1972 to a pitiful 500 per year and there would be 500 titles of projected books (specially filmed books) for the physically handicapped--all while the use of the 8 r.p.m. talking book rather than the 16 r.p.m. would cut the cost of each talking book in half. In other words, Mr. Bray and his division are planning still further to de-emphasize libraries for the blind in years ahead in favor of the larger group of the otherwise physically handicapped. This, of course, is what many of us predicted (and what Mr. Bray and his colleagues so vigorously denied) several years ago when the Federal Act was expanded to permit the then Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress, to give service to other groups. Regardless of how good your State Library may become, it cannot give good service without the assistance and resources of the Library of Congress. Accordingly, policies and activities of Mr. Bray and his division are the responsibility of all blind people everywhere in the country. This fact must never be forgotten or neglected. You need to watch-dog this trend and keep your congressmen and senators informed of your views.

In all these ways, you can make your library a vehicle for a new world for the blind of New Mexico!

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## ANOTHER FRIEND LEAVES US

The Federation lost a stout buttress of its barricades with the death recently of George "Tim" Seward. Tim received the Newel Perry Award from a grateful NFB in 1958 in recognition of his many services to the organization. He was an active Lion who did what was in his power to move that benevolent association into closer liaison with the organized blind, and, in many States he achieved this goal.

In 1966, the Federation again expressed its thanks to Tim Seward by presenting him with a gold watch inscribed "To Tim with affection from the NFB." Mr. Jernigan's words at that time, seem especially appropriate now.

"For more than a decade Tim has shared our triumphs and failures, our hopes, and our dreams. He has not only been with us; he has been one of us. Every blind person in the nation was the beneficiary when, in 1967, Congressman Baring first went to Washington and took Tim with him as administrative assistant," Mr. Jernigan continued. "Which of us can ever forget those years of 1957 and '58. It was the time of the Kennedy-Baring bill and of the great struggle to give meaning to the constitutional right of the blind to organize and have their views heard. That bill was, of course, never officially enacted into law; but its objectives were substantially achieved. Today there is hardly an agency for the blind in the nation which would seriously attempt to prevent a blind person from joining the Federation. No small part of the credit for that achievement must go to Tim Seward. . . . How many times during the past years have we called on Tim to assist

us in great tasks and small--the introduction of a bill, support of a position, securing information, or merely the use of his car for transportation. The response has always been the same, and it has always been affirmative."

"Tim Seward, soldier in the ranks, Federationist, colleague, brother in arms, this is our public expression of a debt of gratitude which can never be wholly paid."

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## THE MISSISSIPPI CONVENTION

by  
E. U. Parker, Jr.

The Rose Room of the Heidelberg Hotel in Jackson, Mississippi, was the site, Saturday, May 27th, of the first general meeting of the National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi since its organization January 15, 1972. About one hundred members were present. The Hazelhurst Chapter was honored for having 100% attendance. Its president, Kenneth Reid, was elected secretary of the State organization to replace Miss Kathrine Stroble who resigned.

The enthusiasm made up for our comparatively small membership, but our one hundred forty-five members represent nearly a doubling of our seventy-six charter members. And indications are that it will not be too long until we will double our membership again.

The young progressive new Governor William L. Waller, was scheduled to give the welcoming address. Due to pressure on his time, he had to appear thirty minutes before the program was supposed to start

and had to limit the address in length. Fortunately, practically everyone was thirty minutes early and what the Governor said made up for his limited time. He did arrive in time to meet everyone present in person. This man is truly a Governor of the people. Some of his remarks are printed at the end of this report.

Next on the program was E. U. Parker, first vice-president of the National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi, and a recent appointee to the Welfare Board. (This Board is over Mississippi Industries for the Blind and the Division for the Blind through the Welfare Department). Parker's subject was *Why We Are Here*. He reviewed the difficulties that we had in organization and talked of the accomplishments the organization has already made and those it hoped for in the future.

Next came Senator Charles Pickering of Jones County. Senator Pickering almost single handedly steered the Model White Cane Law through the 1972 Mississippi Legislature. After keeping us rolling in laughter at his quaint southern humor for fifteen or twenty minutes, Senator Pickering reviewed all the laws of Mississippi concerning blind persons and then went over the Model White Cane Law section by section. We then adjourned to the roof garden of the Hotel for a delicious luncheon and an inspiring talk, entitled *The Three Keys of Success* by the National Federation of the Blind's first vice president, Donald C. Capps of Columbia, South Carolina.

The afternoon session included several speakers representing the different services for the blind in Mississippi.

The meeting was then wound up with a lively business session. The only act of general interest not already mentioned was the appointment of a committee to set up a permanent educational fund as a memorial to the late Dexter Lesley. This fund results from an initial donation of \$100 from the Capitol City Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of California where Lesley was a member at the time of his death last December.

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Speech of Governor William L. Waller  
NFB of Mississippi Convention  
May 27, 1972

[As transcribed by Mrs. E. U. Parker]

I want to indeed tell you how grateful I am for the opportunity to be with you and how pleased that I might make a brief appearance on your program. First, of all I want to say two or three things about individuals that are seated in the room here today. Back about 20 years ago, maybe a little longer than that, I affiliated with a church here in Jackson and I have a very close friend, and we have been as close as his schedule and mine would permit through the years. We have spent each week a part of one day together during all these years and he is totally blind, an employee for many years at the Industries for the Blind, Roger Nutt. When I ran for office in 1955 and 1959 and 1963 and 1967 I don't believe I would have been here today if not for Roger Nutt and people like him so I want to tell you that I am very closely associated with members of your organization. Secondly, as a lawyer, I had a close and abiding relationship with Judge Gabe Fuqua and I want to accord him full



credit for having been my friend and for having been an inspiration to me as a lawyer and as a Judge, appearing in his court and knowing of his judicious attitude and his ability to transact his business, gave me inspiration to go forward. Now back last summer we ran a campaign and I intend to carry out the promises during that campaign that we were the working man and woman's candidate and that we would be the working man and working woman's governor and we are intending to see that the poor people and the people in Mississippi that pay the taxes and scratch out a living in whatever occupation, that they have representative government. And that they have a governor who thinks first, last, and always of the needs of the people of the state and is in a position to respond. We had a lot of county managers, we called them co-ordinators, we had a lot of people who worked very skilfully but no one in my organization from Tennessee to the Gulf of Mexico recognized any greater political expert nor a man who had no greater organizational talent nor a man who had a better approach to politics in getting the job done than our friend, E. U. Parker, of Laurel. He handled Jones County, one of the biggest counties in the state, and did it skillfully and with great success, and E. U., I think we had one of the toughest campaigns in the state against opposition that was well financed and well organized but the poor people got together and with the leadership of E. U. Parker we had a great organization. So I think Mr. Parker is without peer in his field and he is, for your benefit and I hope you will accord me the opportunity to tell you this so you will think about it, know and understand it. Mr. Parker, I believe in the history of the State of Mississippi is the first blind appointee to the

Department of Public Welfare. He is a Board Director, he is one of five men that are to look after the affairs of the Welfare Department. He has as much say so over the operation of the Welfare Department as anyone in the state, including the Governor, including the executive director and where his vote is counted as one-fifth of the total organization of management of the Department of Public Welfare and he is doing an outstanding job.

I want to say to you that I don't think there is a man that ever ran for office, for a local office, for a county office, a district office or statewide office, that has had the magnanimous and almost unanimous support of blind people all over the state, in all 82 counties. I think it was because they feel that I had the courage to represent them in state government and that I would respond to their needs. Now, I am going to look at this organization, having already congratulated you for having the willingness to organize. I want to encourage you to attend all your meetings. I want to compliment your officers for having put this meeting together, a fine group and a fine large attendance here this morning. I want to say that I am going to consider this organization the Board of Directors of the needs and the ability of state government to help the blind and other people who need help. (applause) If you feel that at times in the past your voice has not been heard, then you don't need to have that fear as far as the future is concerned because if you will participate in this great organization and with the identification and friendship we are on the same chain and we can work together and we can gain for you the things you need. I have no plans whatsoever to make any changes

whatsoever in the Division for the Blind unless and until I get it from you. So, as of now, I want you to know that I am your friend. I am not only your friend for maintaining what you want that exists but I am your friend for gaining what you need in the future.

There are a lot of things that I think we can do. There are a lot of things and response that I think the A & I Board can make through the Small Business Bureau that was just created by the outgoing session of the Legislature that can help the small businessmen that might be among you that might want to start their own business or retail operation. I think there are a lot of things in state government that we can do to help. We would like to tell you who are affiliated with the Industries for the Blind and frankly tell you that I have not had time in the four months I have been in office to know all that I need to know about that operation. I do know of some of you who have expressed to me in months gone by the need for improvement and the need for help of the individual worker at this industry and I can assure you that I am aware of it. I hope I can report to you as time goes on that I am knowledgeable enough to know the problems and knowledgeable enough to know the solution.

I had asked for an early appearance here today, we had a number of things that amounted to crises in state government this week and one of them was a bill that you will be reading about over the weekend, and I had a midnight session on it last night and have a large group of people convened in my office now to discuss it with the press. I go from there to Tupelo and from Tupelo to Memphis and I hope you will understand

if I appear to be in a rush that I am trying my best to represent two and one-half million people. . . .

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## SENATE HEARINGS ON VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION LEGISLATION

HR 8395, the Rehabilitation Amendments of 1972, approved without a dissenting vote by the House of Representatives, on March 20, 1972, was considered in public hearings conducted by the recently created Sub-Committee on the Handicapped, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, commencing with Administration witnesses on May 15th.

On May 23rd, the second day of hearings, spokesmen of organizations of and for the blind were heard. John Nagle of the National Federation of the Blind, Irvin P. Schloss of the American Foundation for the Blind and also speaking for the American Association of Workers for the Blind and the Blinded Veterans Association, and Durward K. McDaniel of the American Council of the Blind, appeared as a panel at the witness table. Schloss orally summarized his prepared statement, Nagle read his, and McDaniel stressed particular points made by these two prior witnesses, and there was solid "united front" support for positions taken.

Formal presentations of testimony were followed by more than one hour and a half of questioning by Senators Cranston, California, Acting Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Handicapped; Randolph, West Virginia; Stafford,

Vermont; and Taft, Ohio.

Said Nagle: "We were given an excellent opportunity to explain and emphasize certain proposals in our testimony as we responded to a broad array of thoughtful and penetrating questions. As I think back over the Senate vocational rehabilitation hearings, in more than one hundred appearances before Congressional Committees in behalf of the Federation, I have never felt so thoroughly satisfied that the committee members understood the problems of the blind and other severely handicapped people and the failure of vocational rehabilitation programs to assist them in solving these problems."

In the fall of 1970, several meetings were held in Washington of persons representing the national organizations and agencies in the blind field to develop a bill to amend the Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act to completely eliminate or to substantially reduce weaknesses in the Federal-State vocational rehabilitation program and to re-focus the administration of the program toward more fully and more satisfactorily meeting the vocational and rehabilitative needs of blind persons and of other severely disabled persons.

This bill was introduced in the 92nd Congress by Congressman John Brademas as HR 9847. Earlier this year public hearings were conducted by the Select Sub-Committee on Education, House Committee on Education and Labor, on vocational rehabilitation bills, and on February 1, the NFB and others gave strong factual and philosophic testimony in support of HR 9847. We also argued forcefully for the adoption of HR 7949, a

bill making it possible for a vocational rehabilitation agency to provide rehabilitation services to older blind persons, a measure which had also been developed by the "united front" and had its full and complete support.

When the House Committee on Education and Labor voted out a vocational rehabilitation amending bill (HR 8395), its report on the bill recognized in fine phrases the need to re-direct vocational rehabilitation agency attention to the unmet needs of severely disabled persons for vocational rehabilitation agency help. Unfortunately, however, HR 8395 failed woefully in specific provisions to carry out these fine phrases.

When the blind organization representatives appeared before the Senate Sub-Committee on the Handicapped in vocational rehabilitation hearings, therefore, they urged approval of twenty-one amendments that were based upon the "united front" developed bills, HR 9547 and HR 7949. These amendments, too, had the endorsement and support of other national organizations for the severely disabled as the result of several meetings between the blind groups' spokesmen and officials of these other disability organizations, when it was made clear that HR 9547 (and the amendments "lifted" from its provisions) were intended for the benefit and aid of all severely disabled persons, not just for blind persons.

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## EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

by  
Jim Omvig

On March 5, 1972, a young blind New Yorker wrote me concerning a problem which is all too familiar to long time Federationists. He had applied to two law schools and had been rejected for admission in both solely on the grounds of his blindness. The question of his previous academic achievement was not a factor in either of the rejections.

For many years we have been fighting to secure equal opportunity in education. In view of recent developments in the Congress of the United States, a reprinting of some of my correspondence on this matter will serve as sufficient background material to provide information about the recent passage of this much needed legislation.

On June 23, the President of the United States signed the Education Act Amendments of 1972, one section of which forbids discrimination against the blind in any educational institution which receives federal funds. The Federation (without support from any other organization or agency) has fought long and hard for the passage of this law and, although it has not received a great deal of publicity, it is one of the most significant pieces of legislation which we have passed in recent years.

As you read the following correspondence note carefully the serious, negative implications contained in letters to me. We of the Federation have long understood that our real problem is to be found in the negative attitudes and misunderstandings about us which are held

by others.

The statements of the law school deans demonstrate clearly the validity of our position. The success we have achieved by the passage of this law points up once again the importance of our working together through the organized blind movement to solve our common problems.

As Federationists read these letters and ponder the significance of the victory we have achieved through the enactment of Section 904 of the Education Act Amendments of 1972, they should also consider some related questions and ideas:

1) Where was the American Council of the Blind when the legislation was being drafted and the testimony being presented? The ACB insists that they are a representative organization of the blind and that they do, indeed, have a constructive program. They seem bitterly to resent the charge that they live on negativism and apparently have very few activities not involving attacks upon the National Federation of the Blind. Yet the present legislation gives emphasis once again to ACB's lack of constructive effort.

2) Where was the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped when the present legislation was being planned and considered? Their lack of social action was the very essence of social action.

3) What answer should we give to those persons who ask what benefit there is in joining the organized blind movement and what purpose the movement serves? We should ask them to read Section 904 of the Education Act



Amendments of 1972.

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April 11, 1972

Dean Hiram H. Lesar  
Washington University  
School of Law  
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Dear Dean Lesar:

Recently Mr. [Blank] wrote me concerning his difficulty in gaining admission to the Washington University Law School. He enclosed a copy of your letter of February 23, 1972 in which you state that,

"Although your inability to take the LSAT would not disqualify you from attending law school at Washington University, we have some concern that your handicap may affect your ability to handle the materials. We would, nevertheless, be willing to admit you as a non-degree candidate, to take no more than two courses a semester. Your experience in courses taken on this basis would enable us all to determine whether or not it would be advisable for you to pursue a degree."

Mr. [Blank] wrote to me since I am a blind attorney who went through law school as a blind person. Since I have this background and experience, I believe that my thoughts on the subject might be of some interest to you both concerning Mr. [Blank's] application and, more broadly, concerning potential blind applicants for future enrollment in your law school.

In recent years attitudes about

blindness have changed drastically in this country primarily through the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind. We believe that the disability of blindness need not be a disaster in anyone's life. We also believe that blind people are normal, ordinary people who, given proper training and opportunity, can compete successfully in regular employment and can participate fully in community affairs. We believe that the real problem of blindness is not the physical loss of eyesight but rather is to be found in the wide range of public attitudes--the misunderstandings and misconceptions--which have for so long existed about blindness and blind people.

Because of these misunderstandings and misconceptions blind people have been denied and are continually being denied equal opportunity in our society. We have been denied such things as: jobs for which we are qualified; the right to lease apartments; the right to enjoy places of public amusement, the right to eat in restaurants; the right to purchase life insurance; the right to take city and state merit examinations; the right to serve on juries; the right to matriculate into schools of our choice; and on, and on, and on.

In each of these instances I believe that no denial of opportunity has been based upon hostility or ill will on the part of anyone involved toward blind persons. Rather, these denials are a direct result of the general misunderstanding and lack of information as to the true nature of blindness and this, as I have said, is the real problem of blindness.

Through the National Federation of the Blind, we who are blind have united to work in concert to eradicate the old stereotypes about blindness and thus to

gain equal opportunity in all phases of human endeavor for blind Americans. What we seek is the opportunity to succeed, or to fail—not charity. This, of course, places the responsibility squarely upon the blind individual. First, however, he must be given the chance.

For your information I am enclosing a copy of a letter which I wrote some time ago to Dean Charles Purcell of the Loyola University Law School in which I discussed at some length my ideas as to the kind of relationship which ought to exist between a law school and a blind student.

After reading the information contained in this letter and its enclosures, I would sincerely hope that you would reconsider the position which you have taken concerning Mr. [Blank's] application. It is my understanding that he performed well in undergraduate school and I see no reason why he could not compete successfully as a regular student in your law school. I regret that blind persons are not permitted to take the LSAT examination at the present time. This is a problem upon which the Federation will be working as we continue to strive to improve the lives of blind Americans by engaging in public education efforts, securing much needed legislation, and seeking redress in the courts.

Thank you for your interest in this matter. I would appreciate hearing from you and would be willing to provide any additional information which you might desire.

Cordially,

Jim Omvig, Representative

National Federation of the Blind

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August 13, 1971

Charles R. Purcell, Dean  
School of Law  
Loyola University of Chicago  
41 East Pearson Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Dean Purcell:

... Concerning your blind law school applicant, several things might be said. First of all, I would be very happy to be contacted directly by the young lady in question in order to answer any specific questions which she might have regarding my experience. Therefore, if you care to do so feel perfectly free to furnish her with my name and address.

Perhaps the most important thing that I can say concerning blind applicants is that they should be given wholehearted encouragement rather than discouragement. In the past far too many colleges and universities discouraged blind persons from entering into the professions because the school officials could not imagine how a blind person would be able to perform in a sight-gearred setting. As a result, we have situations even today where blind persons are refused admission into colleges and universities solely on the grounds of their blindness. The National Federation of the Blind is continually fighting to eliminate discrimination of this kind.

I believe that the responsibility of the school in this context is to judge the blind individual on the same basis upon which

other students are judged: namely, he should be accepted or rejected for admission on the basis of the academic record which he has built for himself. His blindness should be irrelevant so far as his admission is concerned.

Along this same line, there has been a trend in this country whereby certain universities have taken it upon themselves to provide special services to blind and other disabled persons. I believe that this entire concept lacks merit. We are aiming for the total integration of blind persons into society, and certainly into the competitive labor market. Therefore, it seems to me that by the time an individual reaches college age he must assume the responsibility of managing his own affairs and must learn to develop alternative techniques whereby he can learn to compete on equal terms in a sighted world.

All I am saying, therefore, is that I do not believe that the university should provide any special service or give special treatment or consideration to a blind student. What the university should do is give the blind applicant an opportunity to go after the education he desires provided he meets the academic standards established for all applicants. This is not to say that the university should not cooperate with the student as he is attempting to work out the system under which he will operate. You will see examples of this idea as I discuss specific problems below.

Turning more specifically to your question, I do not believe that law school presents any substantial problems over and above those already coped with by an individual who has successfully completed

undergraduate school. The basic difference would simply involve the volume of material to be handled and this generally would involve the tremendous amount of material which must be read. In this connection one simple fact of life is that a blind person needs to have materials read to him. The young lady in question will need to make her own arrangements to secure pre-recorded books, to have books recorded specifically for her, or to use sighted readers. I suspect that she has already coped successfully with this problem in undergraduate school. So far as I am concerned the school should not become involved in this matter.

This, however, is an area in which cooperation from the school is extremely desirable. It is necessary for the student to ascertain at the earliest possible time the specific books which will be required for particular courses. From my own experience I know that this information is not always available until classes commence. However, when it is available at some earlier time it is desirable for the student to have it so that he can determine whether pre-recorded books are available or, if they are not, make arrangements to have them taped.

From what I have said it is clear that the blind student will have three methods for accomplishing his voluminous reading requirements: 1) books which have been previously recorded; 2) books which he will have recorded for himself; 3) readers. The amount of each will depend upon the kind of library service which he has available to him. In my opinion it is not desirable for a person to have all of his books in recorded form. As he goes on into employment he will need to use sighted readers in many instances.



Therefore, it is essential for him to learn to function efficiently with a reader during the time he is attending school. Further, in a law school setting where there are vast amounts of research materials to be read there is no other alternative but to use sighted readers. Again, it is up to the student to find his own readers whether they be classmates or outsiders, paid or volunteers. There is no reason for the school to have any involvement in this process. The student may wish, however, to work with school officials in an effort to find suitable rooms where his reader can read aloud to him without bothering other students. Here, again, cooperation from the school is desirable.

In my own case some of my reading was done by classmates who, therefore, needed to read the same materials anyway, and some was done by persons from outside the law school. In either case I found it desirable to pay my readers for their services. The blind student can exercise a good deal more control and can expect more reliability from an employee than he can from a volunteer. In this connection if the student is attending school under the sponsorship of a rehabilitation agency for the blind that agency can and should provide him with funds with which to hire his readers. The agency should recognize that law school will require more reading than undergraduate school and should, therefore, set up the student's budget accordingly.

Other than the fact that law school involves more reading than undergraduate school I see no particular problem for the blind student. The treatment and consideration which I received from

Loyola were excellent. I asked no special favor and was granted none. I was expected to do exactly the same work which was required of all students. This is as it should be.

If the testing system is the same at Loyola today as it was when I was a student there is a real benefit to a blind person in attending our school. When I was a student grading was on an anonymous basis. Students received numbers and our papers were identified by number rather than by name. Therefore, as papers were graded the grades were given purely on the basis of the answer which was written and individual personality was no factor. I point this out since, in some instances where a teacher or professor is grading the paper of a person who is blind, I am convinced that, unconsciously or otherwise, he is likely to give the individual a higher grade than he really deserves.

Regarding some specific study techniques, I found it extremely important to prepare Braille briefs of all of the cases as I read them. In this way I never needed to reread tapes or use sighted readers for my reviewing. In this same vein, I took copious Braille notes in class. Periodically I brought my materials up to date by preparing a Braille outline of the materials which had been covered. In addition, I found it extremely helpful to study and review in a study group. Here, again, blindness is no factor. When I was a student (and I suspect it is the case today) the entire class eventually broke up into small study and review groups.

One topic remains to be discussed. I believe that a blind person, attorney or otherwise, needs to be aware of the fact

that he will face a real problem when he is seeking employment. As I have indicated in previous letters, the real problem of blindness is to be found in the public attitudes which exist concerning blindness and blind people. The average employer simply cannot believe that a blind person could perform successfully on the position which he has available. From my own experience I know that this is as true in the legal profession as it is in any other calling. I interviewed with most of the large law firms in Illinois, with Illinois state agencies, and with most federal agencies before ultimately securing employment with the National Labor Relations Board. Therefore, I would urge any prospective attorney to learn all he can from other blind persons as to how they have handled their particular employment situations. The most effective method whereby a student can gain this knowledge is through association with groups of blind persons. The most effective organization of blind persons in this country is the National Federation of the Blind. For this reason I would urge you to have the young lady in question contact me so that, if she is not already familiar with our organization, I can provide her with pertinent information.

In conclusion all I have said boils down to this: There is no reason why a qualified blind person cannot be successful both in law school and, later, as an attorney. The school should give him the opportunity if his prior record meets the school's admission standards. His blindness should be no factor. He should be treated like any other student. If he is successful, (and I would hope that he would be) that is all well and good. On the other hand, some students--blind or sighted--are not successful in law school. If the blind

student does not perform satisfactorily he should be flunked out just as any poor student would be.

I hope that the information contained herein will be of help to you. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me. I shall look forward to seeing you next summer.

Very truly yours,

James Omvig  
Representative  
National Federation of the Blind

P. S. When I was discussing the Loyola testing system I should have pointed out how I handled it. I had a sighted reader read me the examination. I then dictated my answers so that they were turned in in long hand. This, then, enabled me to be judged anonymously, as was the case with all other students. This is in contrast with my undergraduate school testing where I typed my examinations.

Also, enclosed you will find a "Handbook for Blind College Students." It has been prepared by the student division of the National Federation of the Blind. You may wish to forward this booklet to the young lady in question. It contains a variety of information about services which are available throughout the country.

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April 11, 1972

Dear Mr. [Blank]:

We have considered your letter of March 10. We understand that blind students have successfully completed the study of law at other law schools, but we are still concerned about the problems a blind student might face at our law school. We, therefore, will hold to our earlier decision offering only probationary admission at this time. Please let us know by May 10 whether or not you will accept this status.

Sincerely,

Gary I. Boren  
Associate Dean

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June 21, 1972

Mr. Jim Omvig, Representative  
National Federation of the Blind  
524 Fourth Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Mr. Omvig:

Dean Lesar has referred your inquiry to the Admissions Committee so that we might explain the action we took with respect to [Mr. Blank] and our position about future blind applicants to the Law School.

The Admissions Committee normally considers in making its decisions whether or not to accept a student the LSAT score and undergraduate grade point average. For this coming year, these two factors were weighted equally. We do not ordinarily admit students who have not taken the LSAT, but because the blind are unable at this point to take the test, and because we do not for that reason feel that

blind applicants should be excluded from the school, we waived this requirement for [Mr. Blank]. But this fact did leave us without one of the aids we use in reaching decisions.

Blind students, like all other applicants, have varying degrees of ability. Without the use of one of our usual tools we are less able to determine whether a blind applicant is likely to perform well here. We do know that ours is a demanding school and that we have no special facilities to aid the blind. We also have about thirteen applications for each available space and, therefore, have large numbers of qualified applicants about whom we can make more complete judgements waiting for each vacancy.

The blind applicant lacks the same information about LSAT scores and is, or ought to be, just as uncertain as we are about his ability to handle the materials. Nor can he be aware of the level of performance required of all students here. The probationary period offered to [Mr. Blank] was intended to provide the School and him with an opportunity to find out both whether he had the ability to perform well here and whether the volume of material was too great for him to handle. We do not feel that all blind persons are incapable of handling law studies here on a full-time basis. Our concern was with the applicant before us and determining what his abilities were.

We have not had an application from a blind person other than [Mr. Blank] in recent years. We have no hard and fast policy and we would appreciate your thoughts on the matters of concern expressed above. Perhaps they will influence us in the way we act on future

applications. In the meantime, we are writing the Law School Admissions Test Council requesting more information on why the LSAT cannot be administered to the blind and what is being done to change that policy.

Sincerely,

Gary I. Boren  
Associate Dean

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June 29, 1972

Gary I. Boren  
Associate Dean  
School of Law  
Washington University  
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Dear Mr. Boren:

This will thank you for and reply to your letter of June 21, 1972, concerning the application of potential blind students for admission into your law school. My thoughts on the question as to whether blind applicants should or should not be admitted into law schools have been fully explained in my letter to Dean Charles Purcell of the Loyola University of Chicago Law School under date of August 13, 1971, as well as my letter to Dean Lesar of your school under date of April 11, 1972. Accordingly, I will not take the time here to repeat what I have already stated. However, for your convenience (in the event you have not already seen them), attached please find copies of the two letters mentioned supra. If you have not already read these letters, I hope that you will do so and will give them full consideration in determining future

policy.

I, too, am deeply concerned about the fact that blind potential law students are not currently afforded the opportunity to take the LSAT examination. This is a matter to which the National Federation of the Blind is currently giving serious attention. We hope to have this situation resolved fairly quickly, through legal action if necessary.

So far as your particular school is concerned, I am sure that it is demanding. I would hope that this is the case, not only in your law school, but in most law schools generally throughout this country.

As you will observe from my attachments, I believe that a school should make no special provisions for blind students. I believe that schools generally should not consider equipping themselves to provide special services for blind students. Ultimately, the blind professional will need to develop skills whereby he can compete successfully with his sighted peers. So far as I am concerned, the student needs to begin to function in this manner at the time he is preparing for his profession. What I am saying, therefore, is that if a student qualifies for admission, he should be accepted. If the blind student fails to perform satisfactorily, he should be flunked out in the same manner as any poor student would be flunked out.

Regarding admission, the LSAT people have told me that, since they will not administer the test to blind students, schools should consider other factors such as undergraduate academic records and graduate record exam reports.

I sincerely hope that you will give serious weight to what I have said and, therefore, alter your enrollment policies when students apply to your law school. If I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Cordially,

Jim Omvig, Representative  
National Federation of the Blind

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July 14, 1972

Gary I. Boren  
Associate Dean  
School of Law  
Washington University  
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Dear Mr. Boren:

Although you have probably not had sufficient time to fully consider my letter to you of June 29 and, therefore, have not replied to it, I believe that recent developments in the Congress of the United States should be brought to your attention so that your Admissions Committee will have all available information as it considers policy matters regarding future blind applicants to your law school.

First of all, perhaps a very brief description of the National Federation of the Blind is in order. We are not an agency speaking "for the blind". We are the blind speaking for ourselves. We are a nationwide, non-profit, educational organization whose primary purpose is to improve the social and economic well-being of all blind Americans. First of

all, we educate ourselves as to the true nature of blindness. Secondly, we carry on vigorous public education campaigns and, in addition, seek to educate legislators as to the kinds of laws which are needed to substantially improve our lives by giving us access to equal opportunity in our society. Finally, we go to court, when necessary, in order to secure and protect the rights of blind Americans.

I have given you this brief background about the Federation since the recent development which I mentioned above is a direct result of our activities. For many years the Federation has been seeking passage of legislation which would make educational institutions available to the blind assuming, of course, that the blind individual involved meets the academic requirements of the particular educational institution.

On June 23 President Nixon signed into law the Education Act Amendments of 1972. This is Public Law 92-318. Contained in this law is a section for which the National Federation of the Blind has long labored.

*Section 904-Prohibition Against  
Discrimination Against the Blind*

"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of blindness or severely impaired vision, be denied admission in any course of study by a recipient of federal financial assistance for any education program or activity, provided, however, that nothing herein shall be construed to require any such institution to provide any



special services to such person because of his blindness or visual impairment."

As you can see from this law, and as is clear from my previous correspondence, we are simply seeking equal opportunity in educational facilities. We are not seeking special treatment or consideration. We are not asking an educational institution to provide us with special services. In fact, we have vigorously resisted when some few educational facilities have set up special programs and have attempted to custodialize us by requiring that we make use of said special services as a prerequisite to acceptance into the particular facility involved.

To sum up, if a particular blind applicant meets the academic requirements of the school into which he is seeking admission, it is now not only the moral but also the legal responsibility of the school to admit him. His blindness is irrelevant.

You have indicated to me that many students are not successful in law school. If a particular blind student is not successful, then he should be dropped from class along with other unsuccessful students.

I have spoken to you directly concerning the responsibility of the educational institution. Our new law makes it equally clear through its proviso that the blind student must bear equal responsibility. First of all, it is his responsibility to put forth every effort to succeed academically. Further, it is his responsibility to get to and from classes; to secure readers; to secure needed Braille and recorded materials; to arrange for his

housing; etc.

I hope that the materials which I have previously sent to you together with the information contained herein will assist your Admissions<sup>3</sup> Committee in formulating a new and constructive policy regarding future blind applicants to your law school.

I would very much appreciate hearing from you once you have had sufficient time to review the materials which you now have.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Cordially,

Jim Omvig, Representative  
National Federation of the Blind

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WASHINGTON CONVENTION  
by  
Ralph V. Solberg

The 1972 convention of the Washington State Association of the Blind opened August 26th at the Roosevelt Hotel in Seattle. The three day event proved to be the largest and most progressive in WSAB's history. One hundred thirty-eight persons were in attendance for a record number. The first resolution to be introduced changed the name of the organization to the National Federation of the Blind of Washington. This resolution passed by a large majority. Other resolutions to gain passage included a renewed allout effort to gain the legislative action to create the Washington Commission for the Blind.

Officers and committee chairmen were elected as follows: Carl Jarvis was reelected president, Sue Ammeter, Seattle, vice-president; Harold Robinson, Spokane, secretary; Ruth Ridge, Seattle, treasurer; Wes Osborne, Tacoma, reelected legislative committee chairman; Kelly Ridge, Seattle, reelected ways and means; Gary Ernest, Othello, organizations; Ralph Solberg, Warden, public relations; and Ed Foscue, Seattle, welfare. Osborne, Solberg, and Foscue were elected to their positions by acclamation.

A contest among local chapters with three-fold results was introduced. This contest would consist of marching to raise funds for the Washington State Association for Retarded Children. First and foremost the contest would produce funds for a very worthy cause. Secondly, it would stimulate competition between chapters to gain title as a chapter raising the most money per capita membership. And thirdly, it would help to change the over-all image of the blind from receiving to giving. Another big step forward at the post-convention board meeting was that it was voted to contract the services of Al Fisher of Seattle to a full time position to work throughout the State under the direction of the Executive Committee.

A capacity crowd at the banquet heard an address by Ken Hopkins, director of the Idaho Commission for the Blind who was attending the convention on behalf of President Jernigan.

The newest chapter in the State, representing Grant and Adams counties in Central Washington, received its charter. This chapter, formed last December, has received much publicity on behalf of its job opportunities committee and their

efforts to seek employment for its members and others. The new chapter also issued a challenge to all other chapters to increase their membership and or organize new chapters in nearby areas with an over all goal of at least doubling the size of the state membership by convention '73.

A number of persons were heard commenting on what was termed the new era of excitement in the organization. A new progressiveness and a feeling of unity closed the convention. A long-time member, Kelly Ridge of Seattle, stressed this unity at the close of the convention when he stood up and said: "We have the best slate of officers and committee chairmen that we've ever had. Let's all get behind them and go to work."

Convention '73 is slated for the capital city of Olympia. Many are already expressing their enthusiasm about convention '73. They are eagerly awaiting the results of the year's progress as the Washington State blind move ahead.

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MEET OUR STATE PRESIDENT-  
ALBERT BEASLEY  
AND OUR STATE AFFILIATE-  
MISSISSIPPI

The National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi was organized on January 15, 1972, and Albert Beasley, Jackson, Mississippi, was elected as its first president. Albert Beasley was born in Utica, Mississippi in 1917 and lost his sight as the result of glaucoma at the age of seven. He graduated from the Mississippi School for the Blind and attended Mississippi State College at Starkville for one year. During most of his life Albert



Beasley has pursued two careers. During early manhood he was a professional musician with Buck Turner and his country and western band which traveled extensively over the south. During this period of time Albert also worked as an automotive mechanic. For the past 22 years Albert has been employed with Mississippi Industries for the Blind in Jackson, and during 1970 he was named the outstanding blind person of the year by National Industries for the Blind and received the Peter J. Salmon award. Throughout the years Mr. Beasley has continued his work as a musician and is a professional organist and pianist. Albert and Louise Beasley have four children and seven grandchildren. They are members of the Christian Church and Albert is a ham radio operator (call letters W5DRT). He is a Mason and a member of the Royal Order of Moose. The Beasleys have many friends throughout the State and over the past quarter century their home has been a friendly gathering place for blind persons visiting the State capital as well as those residing there.

Before 1972 Mississippi had no statewide organization of the blind which was open to all blind persons, but the organizational meeting in January of this year began a new day. Within three months of that meeting, local chapters at Laurel, Hazelhurst, and Jackson had been established. From a beginning membership of approximately 70, the National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi now has more than 180 members. It has conducted fund-raising activities and a successful legislative campaign which resulted in Mississippi adopting the Model White Cane Law. The National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi held its first statewide meeting on May 20 and more

than 100 members were in attendance. [See the convention report elsewhere in this issue]

The National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi is on the move and looking ahead. It had fourteen delegates in attendance at the National Federation of the Blind Convention in Chicago and its members are already looking forward to New York. In addition to the three chapters which have already been organized, plans are well underway to establish others. Each of the three chapters was represented in Chicago.

The next statewide meeting of the NFB of Mississippi is being planned for December of this year at which time the affiliate is certain to have more than 200 members. In Mississippi the employment opportunities available to blind persons are extremely limited. The State has a very good program at Mississippi Industries for the Blind and a substantial Randolph-Sheppard vending stand operation, but employment of blind persons in the occupations and professions of the competitive labor market is almost non-existent. As a broad objective, the National Federation of the Blind of Mississippi is concerned with expanding the employment opportunities for the State's blind citizens in the competitive labor market and in substantially improving Mississippi's services to the blind. The Model White Cane Law has already been adopted by the State Legislature and approved by the Governor but other legislative changes are also needed and the affiliate is committed to increasing its membership in order to become more broadly representative of the opinions and aspirations of the blind and to substantial efforts at program

improvement and public education.

Mississippi was slow to join the National Federation of the Blind, but it is on the move. It will not falter nor equivocate. The blind of Mississippi are looking ahead, and the blind of Mississippi are willing to work together to achieve their goals. We are proud to be members of the NFB, and more of us plan to see you in New York.

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### BIOLOGY AND THE BLIND: SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

by

Geerat J. Vermeij

[Editor's Note: President Jernigan invited Gary Vermeij to be a participant in the panel on job opportunities at the 1972 NFB Convention. Mr. Vermeij wrote in response to a telephone conversation: "I regret that I cannot accept, but as you know, I shall be pursuing field work. . . . I emphasize that these are not excuses which would hide my not wishing to attend the Conventions. I feel strongly, however, that if I am to be a competent scientist, I must do a competent job of research. . . . In particular, it would give me great pleasure to meet you. . . ." "Since . . . the subject can be most appropriately treated in writing, I have decided to submit a short article. . . ."]

Mr. Jernigan replied: "Although I understand your reasons for not attending the Convention, I certainly hope that you will be able to do so soon. Your work is important. Science is important, but so is the work of the Federation. I do not mean to sound preachy in saying this, for I know that you recognize the fact as well

as I. In any case, I thank you for the article, and I hope to have the opportunity to meet you soon." ]

Biology is traditionally regarded by the general population as a science whose mastery depends more on one adaptation than any other, namely, that of sight. Such techniques as microscopy, dissection, and classification of organisms on the basis of color and other visual characteristics have indeed played fundamental roles in the development of the science, and will without any question continue to do so. As a result, even the most elementary aspects of the biological sciences have for time immemorial been closed to the blind, with, I hasten to point out, some major exceptions such as the early eighteenth century natural historian Rumphius and, late in life, Swammerdam. Indeed, there is much in the study of living organisms which can profitably be done without the aid of light perception. In the following pages I wish to give a brief account of my own experience in biology, and discuss the kinds of problems and possibilities which exist in a blind person's approach to biology.

I became totally blind at the age of three as a result of what appears to have been glaucoma. The combination of having intelligent parents who were and are excellent naturalists, and certain similarly inclined teachers in my first years of schooling, created an environment conducive to my early appreciation of plants, birds, shells, and minerals. Being brought up in the lush grass expanses of the polders and the heaths and pine forests of the Utrecht hills in the Netherlands, I was quickly exposed to all the tactile, olfactory, and even gustatory pleasures of the organisms about me. My mentors

regarded as axiomatic, as well they should, that I should not be denied the pleasures of Nature simply because I happened to be blind. Being thus encouraged and motivated by my surroundings, I took an interest in seashells at the age of ten, shortly after having moved to the United States. Ever since, it seemed apparent to me that I would become some manner of biologist. As an undergraduate, I concentrated my studies in biology, at the same time obtaining a good foundation in geology, mathematics, and physics. Subsequently I entered Yale University's Department of Biology, from which I received a Ph.D. degree in June, 1971, on a dissertation bearing the faintly pompous title, "Morphological patterns in high intertidal gastropods: an essay on adaptive strategies and their limitations." Presently, I am assistant professor of zoology at the University of Maryland in College Park. Most of my time is divided now between research on molluscs and plants, and on preparations for one undergraduate and one graduate course which I teach each academic year.

For the present purpose it would be most instructive to examine in some detail some of the problems I have faced in pursuing an academic career in biology. These difficulties fall into two overlapping categories: (1) Those related to technical limitations; and (2) those related to human limitations. Technical difficulties are partly manipulative in nature (the act of dissecting or operating on organisms), or arise because of the impossibility of translating purely visual phenomena into forms which may be perceived by the other senses. While techniques of microscopy are not as yet available to blind scientists, their development is certainly within the realm of present

know-how. A system using a scanning light sensor which translates intensity into pitch can be systematically traced over the projected image of an object under a microscope, and meaningful patterns can and do emerge after some experience. Probably the only reason for the lack of exploitation of these technical possibilities is the dearth of active and prospective blind biologists or others who might use them.

My own interests in biology fall roughly into 3 overlapping categories: (1) intertidal biology; (2) biogeography; and (3) theoretical aspects of morphology, ecology, and evolutionary biology.

Intertidal biology encompasses ecological and physiological aspects of plants and animals living between tidemarks in the marine environment. My work in this area has dealt principally with molluscs (snails, clams, etc.) and how they are adapted to such rigorous conditions as intense drying during low tide, high temperature, and fluctuating salt concentration of the water. An important part of the research has involved the collecting of living material, together with making careful observations on the particular habitats and shore levels in which the various species occur. I have carried out this type of field work in many parts of the world, with particular emphasis on the tropics; the aim of the work, which is still very much in progress, is to acquire a solid basis for comparing communities of organisms in similar environments in different parts of the world. Like any sane field biologist, I take a field assistant with me on such expeditions; the assistant aids in setting up instrumentation for measuring environmental parameters, orienting me to

the general lay-out of the shore, guiding me over terrain until a suitable location is reached, and the like. Once at a suitable spot, I freely explore the vicinity by myself, collecting my own material and making my own observations—after all, there would be little point for me to go into the field and have someone else do the necessary work for me.

My interest in biogeography, the study of why plants and animals are distributed over the world as they are, involves no particularly novel or difficult techniques, and in theory could be done by anyone sufficiently knowledgeable of ecology and evolutionary biology. The intertidal work and the responsibility of teaching a course in the subject were the principal forces which have aroused my curiosity in biogeography.

The third category of my interests in biology consists of a heterogeneous set of topics involving the general question of how plants and animals are adapted to their surroundings, and how their particular mode of adaptation influences the structure of the community in which they live. This work involves both theoretical work and direct measurements of the shapes of organisms. In measuring angles and linear distances, I have tended to use standard models of goniometers or calipers which are then modified with appropriate slits or raised markings so that I may read them. For instruments such as highly accurate balances, which must remain as undisturbed as possible, a sighted technician is more appropriate to read the instrument. In general, however, I believe that there exist many measuring devices in which only a minor alteration is needed to make them useful to totally blind investigators.

Aside from specific techniques, some general points should be emphasized. The ability to visualize form, whether of a leaf, a shell, or the arrangement of cells in a tissue or atoms in a molecule, is essential to an understanding of organisms. It enables one to make useful observations and, even more importantly, to see connections between what would otherwise be unrelated objects or phenomena. I feel strongly that the ability to work with and meaningfully interpret illustrations, of abstract geometrical form or actual biological structure, should be developed early in the education of blind children much as it is developed in the early experience of sighted children. This is one area where there is still a significant, and, to my mind, intolerable gap between the education of blind and sighted pupils. Not only does an early exposure to illustrations and to the objects themselves potentially lead to an enhanced ability to observe and compare objects in one's surroundings, but it cultivates the ability to recognize something quickly for what it is. This last attribute is crucial in pursuing field work, for one must be able to decide quickly whether what one is touching or hearing is potentially dangerous or not. Raised Braille illustrations and three-dimensional models are also of great use in communicating information which is otherwise difficult to transmit. Thus, while the process of mitosis (cell-division) is unobservable in the present state of technology, the blind student can obtain a relatively accurate impression of the events by observing models available in most introductory undergraduate biology courses. Similar models exist for many other biological phenomena, for three-dimensional structure of macromolecules, and for the anatomical structure of basic body plans in animals



and plants.

Finally, it should be pointed out that, provided the investigator is sufficiently familiar with experimental techniques, methods of measurement, and the assumptions underlying his research, it is the interpretation of observations and experimental results which lead to increased understanding in biology. Anyone can design a good experiment, whether he be sighted or not, provided he knows his system well enough. Indeed, many laboratory biologists whose research is funded by large grants employ technicians who do most of the actual manipulations in the experiments; the investigator designs and interprets the work. While I believe that first-hand observations and manipulations are the best way to comprehend and evaluate all one's techniques, observations, and assumptions fully, there is little doubt that those aspects of research which blind persons, for technical reasons, cannot perform could be easily accomplished by any competent technician or assistant.

The second category of potential problems encountered in pursuing a career in the biological sciences is related to the attitudes and actions of colleagues and superiors. There are many points on one's training where such difficulties can occur—a professor might not allow a blind student to take his course or the laboratory associated with it, a blind person might be denied entrance to graduate school because of a supposed lack of “facilities”, and so on. While I have encountered remarkably little in the way of such misgivings or actions, even from directors of field laboratories, there have been a few such cases in which some insufficiently informed person or

unwilling bureaucrat have thrown blocks in my path. One of the more notable of these events was the suggestion on the part of a state agency for the blind that I not take up biology as an area of concentration during my undergraduate years; there would be no job opportunities later, it was alleged. Had I not had a solid backing from the faculty, who wrote the agency stating in effect that I would be a biology concentrator whether they liked it or not, I would have changed my area of concentration to paleontology (study of fossils) which, for a reason quite unfathomable to me, the state agency would accept (modern paleontology requires a thorough background in all of biology, and training for it would have been no different than that for biology in general).

There is clearly no general set of rules for dealing with alleged discrimination against the blind, and there is probably a not insignificant component of luck or historical accident associated with avoiding or defeating discrimination. In the sciences, however, it is at least theoretically possible to acquire a good professional reputation independent of blindness or any other disability. Early in one's career, when one is obscure and nearly anonymous, one may submit scientific papers to journals whose editor and reviewers will generally not associate the author of the paper with any physical property of that author; consequently, the work will be evaluated purely on its own merits.

It is difficult to offer any generalizations about strategies which blind persons should employ in order to pursue the biological sciences. The only ones which come to mind would apply

equally well to sighted persons: have a well-developed curiosity about the world about you, develop the ability to observe carefully, be rigorous and objective, be ready to demonstrate ability and accomplishment when faced with reluctance or skepticism, and so on. The greatest single hurdle which the blind and their advisers must overcome is the belief that biology is mostly a visual discipline and therefore not open to the blind. It must be realized that it is not impossible to perform field observations or experience, to keep up with the voluminous scientific literature (I use paid readers), to direct graduate students, to teach a meaningful and interesting course, to communicate with colleagues. Assuming that a blind person conforms to the criteria set up for any other biologist, there is no fundamental reason why he cannot compete successfully for grants or positions. Now that society has evolved to be more tolerant of the blind, and given the recent increase in technological capability, there is no reason whatever why the blind cannot successfully inhabit the set of occupational niches categorized in present-day society under the collective term "biologist".

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#### NEWS AND VIEWS-SOUTH AFRICA

[Editor's Note: The following correspondence was between John Nagle, Chief of the Washington Office of the National Federation of the Blind USA and an interested person in South Africa]

Dear Mr. Nagle,

I wish to thank you for your letter received earlier this year and I must

explain immediately that I have been slow in replying to your letter since I wished to do some research on certain matters you have raised in your letter. I am referring here to your question of the possible employment of blind persons in the Civil Service of South Africa, both at national and local levels. A further matter you raised in your letter was the question of a South African organisation for the blind affiliating to the National Federation of the Blind. I think that both these matters are closely linked one with the other, however, I think also it is necessary to explain briefly the constitutional framework upon which our society is based in order that you may appreciate the legal machinery we have available for securing employment for blind persons in South Africa.

The first settlement in South Africa was by Dutch settlers in 1652 and they developed the area known as the Cape of Good Hope. During the Napoleonic Wars the British took the Cape Colony from the Dutch by force of arms and in 1814 the British decided to retain the Cape of Good Hope. The British also colonised another area known as Natal which is on the Indian coastline. It should be remembered here that the Dutch settlers in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope were not happy with the British rule and they established two further independent territories under their own flags known as the Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. These territories were colonised by the British after a war which raged from 1899 to 1902. The reason for this war was that the British became interested in the tremendous gold and diamond wealth to be found in the Dutch Republics and a further reason was that the British felt that their subjects who were residing there

were being discriminated against politically. By the year 1908 the four colonies who were all now under British rule decided to form the Union of South Africa which was established in 1910. Over the years the descendants of the Dutch settlers who are known as "Afrikaaners" struggled politically to establish a Republic. They succeeded in establishing a Republic in 1961 and this Republic is not part of the British Commonwealth. Though British law has influenced our legal heritage, our legal heritage is not the English common law, it is the Roman and Roman Dutch law which was brought to the Cape of Good Hope by the Dutch settlers who had come from the province of Holland or the Netherlands.

The importance of this historical sketch for our purposes is that the Republic of South Africa has inherited a Union similar to the Union which exists in the British Isles. It has also inherited a parliamentary system which is in form a replica of the British Parliament. The South African Parliament is absolutely sovereign as the British Parliament is and all institutions of government are subordinate to the central Parliament. The Republic of South Africa thus has a Parliament which is made up of a House of Assembly, that is, the House of elected representatives, a Senate and the State President. South Africa has Cabinet Government just like Britain, that is, the Prime Minister and his Ministers are members of either House of Parliament and are responsible to the members of Parliament. As I have explained previously, South Africa was divided into four colonies but since Union they have gained the status of provinces, that is, South Africa is a Union made up of four

provinces. Each province has its Provincial Council which is elected. Each province is further divided up into Municipal Areas and these Municipal Areas are governed by elected Municipalities. As the Provincial Councils are subordinate to Parliament so are the Municipalities both subordinate to Parliament and the Provincial Council in which Province it falls.

The research I have done indicates that the employment of the blind as well as other handicapped groups is regulated by a law of Parliament known as the Public Service Act 54 of 1957. This Act applies to both handicapped persons employed in the Central Government Service as well as to the Provincial Services. There was some difficulty in establishing the accuracy of this statement since the Central Government makes its own arrangements for employment and the Provincial Administration of each province makes their own arrangements for employment. This Act however does not apply to Municipalities and in fact Municipalities do not seem to have any regulation referring particularly to the employment of handicapped persons. The section applying to the handicapped as well as to the blind reads as follows:

#### *Section 11 (2)*

"No person shall be appointed permanently or be transferred and appointed permanently... whether on probation or not, to any post in the administrative, clerical, professional, technical, general A or general B division unless such a person is a South African citizen and is of good character and in the opinion of the Commission free from any mental or physical defect, disease or



*infirmity which would be likely to interfere with the proper carrying out of his duties* or to render necessary his retirement from the public service before reaching the pensionable age.”

The words “physical defect” obviously applies to blind persons. It also means that he can never obtain permanent appointment nor promotion. There is, however, subsection (3) of section 11 which has a softening effect on section 11 (2) as just quoted. It reads as follows:

### *Section 11 (3)*

“in the filling of any post or the making of any appointment in the public service, due regard shall be had to the qualifications, relative merit, efficiency and suitability of the persons who are eligible for promotion, transfer or appointment.”

The words “merits” and “suitability” seems to imply that if a handicapped person has the merits and is suitable to the post he could be appointed permanently. I do not know how the question of promotion will be effected. In South Africa to the best of my knowledge there are only three fields of employment in which blind persons are acceptable to both the central and provincial services. These fields are: switchboard operators, music teachers in government schools, and physiotherapists employed in government and provincial hospitals. These fields are not affected by promotion. As far as the legal profession is concerned there have been attempts made from time to time, however, without much success. There is one registered blind person who is in the employ of the central government service, however he still has enough sight in order

to read for himself with the aid of a magnifying glass. He has admitted to me that if he should lose the sight he still has, he believes, that he will lose his employment since he will not be able to read for himself. The question might arise with you whether it would be possible to dismiss a man who has become unfit to perform his duties in the opinion of his superiors in spite of his permanent appointment. I quote from the above mentioned Act from section 14 (6) (d) “on account of unfitness for his duties, or incapacity to carry them out efficiently”.

It should also be noted that if a handicapped person should obtain a post and as a consequence of what was said in section 11 (2) he does not obtain permanent appointment, he can be dismissed at any time even though he has worked in the civil service for a period of years. I quote again from the same Act from section 14 (6) (c) “if, for reasons other than his own unfitness or incapacity, his discharge will promote efficiency or economy in the department or office in which he is employed” and also subsection (f) “if, in the case of an officer appointed on probation, his appointment is not confirmed (he may be dismissed).”

Now it might occur to you that this is discriminatory legislation and why do we South Africans not take legal steps as you would do in the USA to have the Act declared invalid by our courts. This is not possible in South Africa since I have explained that Parliament is absolutely sovereign, just as the British Parliament is absolutely sovereign. Our courts are not in a position to declare any law promulgated and passed by Parliament as invalid. The only thing Parliament has to show is that it has followed the procedure as laid down

in the Constitution, that is, each bill must be read three times before the House of Assembly and three times before the Senate, it needs a simple majority vote and the signature of the State President. If parliament has conformed to these rules of procedure there is absolutely nothing the courts can do but administer the law. Thus, the only way a law can be changed in this country no matter how just or unjust is by Parliament's amending or abolishing the Act. I may just add that I discussed the appointment of blind persons with a senior civil servant and he explained that they interpret this Act as flexibly as possible; however, you will appreciate that it is not possible for them to go beyond this. He also explained further that they receive directives from the Minister whose Department is responsible for the employment of a particular handicapped person. You might ask what type of directive the Minister of Justice would direct to his juniors if a totally blind person should apply with the required qualifications for a post. I can state on good authority that the answer will be negative, since I have negotiated myself with the Minister of Justice. I think, therefore, that the position as far as the civil service is concerned is rather gloomy at the moment. However, I do not think that it is impossible to solve. I will try and explain below the best method of attack available in terms of the South African constitutional framework. It should be remembered that the South African constitution has no Bill of Rights built into it nor do we have any law which represents a Bill of Rights. Our Civil Liberties are to be found in our Common Law, that is, the Roman Law and the Roman-Dutch Law, but it should be remembered that the rights of the individual can be whittled away by

Parliament since this body enjoys absolute sovereignty.

As far as the Municipalities are concerned, I have said that they are not covered by Act 54 of 1957 discussed above. Except for switchboard operators, I only know of one person employed in a Municipality who is blind in a professional capacity, that is, Dr. Walter Cohen, the chairman of the World Braille Council. The problem with the Municipalities is that it would only be the Municipalities of the larger cities who possibly would have the type of employment available for a professional man. But the further problem is that the Municipalities do not pay on the whole as well as the Provincial and Central Government services and consequently a blind person employed by one of them will not be able to pay for his assistance from his salary, that is, the person assisting him with reading his files and possibly driving him to various places to fulfil his functions.

I am now coming to the second matter you raised and that is why a South African Organisation for the Blind in South Africa does not affiliate with the International Federation of the Blind. I believe, however, I might be wrong on this aspect that there is an organisation by the name of the South African Blind Worker's Organisation, who is affiliated to your organisation. I believe that all organisations for the blind in South Africa would be passive affiliate members if they took up membership with your organisation. I have explained my reasons for this in a letter I wrote to Dr. Jacob Freid, unfortunately, I have not a copy of that letter. But if you are interested in my reasons, I am sure Dr. Freid would be quite willing to give you a copy of my

letter. But if you prefer it I will write you a letter stating my reasons. I may just add that I have heard in the last six months quite a bit of the activities of the National Federation of the Blind and I would like to learn more about it. I am not only interested for my own personal benefit but I would use the information to promote affiliation to your organisation. This I will do in spite of my reasons for believing that organisations for the blind in this country will be passive affiliate members; however, I believe passive membership is better than no membership at all. I must thank you for the copy of "The Model White Cane Law" which I received. Unfortunately, I did not receive a pamphlet describing "The First 30 Years" of your organisation.

I am going to take the liberty of asking you a few questions since you offered to answer any enquiries I might put to you. The questions are the following:

1. If a blind person in the legal profession is employed by the civil service or local government service, who pays for the assistance he requires to do his research, look up files and drive possibly his car during business hours?

2. What type of work would be available to a blind person in the civil service in the USA who has majored in Political Science and specialised in African Studies?

3. I have heard that in the USA there are volunteer bureaux which assist blind professional men with the problems I have questioned you about in questions 1 and 2; however, I know nothing about them and I am interested in their effectiveness.

4. I would be very interested to receive a report on the National Convention held this July in Chicago by your organisation.

5. I am also interested in knowing whether it is possible to subscribe to your monthly publication known as "The Monitor" according to my information.

I stated earlier in my letter that I believe that you could help us in South Africa within the terms of our constitutional framework. What I meant by this was that by explaining how you overcome your problems in the USA would enable us to discuss your methods at very high level with the government which would possibly persuade them to take a different attitude. I have information of how these problems are solved in Great Britain and it would not be impossible for me to obtain the information from countries such as the Netherlands, Western Germany, and Canada. I should mention that the South African Government is always keen to be in step with the major western countries and therefore I think that we could persuade them to a different point of view on the employment of the blind provided we have the information at our disposal.

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Dear Mr. . . .

This is to reply to your recent letter of July 30, 1972 and to thank you for your most informative comments and observations about your government and society generally.

In a way, your problem on changing basic law is very similar to ours. Just as

your Parliament enacts the law of your land, our Congress performs the same function in our nation. And it was because of this, that separate state organizations of blind persons joined to form the National Federation of the Blind in 1940, in order that blind people might have an effective instrument to bring about changes in national laws and national policies and programs.

I suppose what I am saying to you is this—that the blind of South Africa must do just as the blind of America did 32 years ago. You must form a nationwide organization of blind persons that will be an advocate and spokesman for the blind at the highest levels of government. I know this task is not an easy one to perform. It certainly has not been easy and it continues not being easy to expand and strengthen the organized blind movement as expressed and formalized in the National Federation of the Blind. But I think no blind person who has had a share in the growth of our movement would say it has not been worth the effort. Every blind adult and every blind child in this nation today gains beneficial results from the many accomplishments of the National Federation of the Blind. So let you and your fellow blind South Africans go and do likewise!

Now to deal with the questions you asked at the conclusion of your letter:

1. Under our Federal and State Civil Service, a blind person who is employed at a high enough level of responsibility will have available to him a sighted secretary as would sighted persons in the same positions. The blind government employee at a lower level of employment and not entitled to secretarial

help incidental to such employment is allowed to pay, by Federal law, a reader from his own resources or have the assistance of an unpaid volunteer.

2. As to the kinds of employment a blind person knowledgeable in African affairs might be able to obtain—he might be able to secure a position in one of the innumerable international aid programs. He also might be able to secure a job in the State Department, which handles our relationships with the nations of the world, if such a job could be performed in this country. I give the foregoing qualification for I know blind persons will not be accepted as applicants for our overseas service. Then too, there is always the possibility that a company doing export-import business with African countries would consider employing a blind person informed and knowledgeable on African countries.

3. As to the effectiveness of voluntary organizations or even governmental organizations whose function it is to provide services and assistance to blind persons—as I travel about the country and talk with employed blind persons, I invariably find that they, themselves, secured their own employments, when the work they are doing is of a professional nature.

4. & 5. By sending a copy of this letter to our *Braille Monitor* editor, I am requesting that he arrange for you to receive the *Braille Monitor* in all three editions—print, Braille, and on records. The September issue will be entirely devoted to the national Convention held in Chicago, Illinois, in July of this year.



Under separate cover, I am sending the print and record versions of one of our publications on the NFB, "The First Thirty Years". I hope the foregoing will prove informative, and I will be happy to be of such further help as I am able.

Sincerely yours,

John F. Nagle, Chief  
Washington Office

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### MONTANA CONVENTION

by

Lelia M. Proctor

Members of the Montana Association for the Blind, Inc., met for their 27th annual convention on the campus of Montana State University in Bozeman on the weekend of July 21-23. This year the Capital City Chapter (Helena) was our host affiliate. (Since 1948 the Association's conventions have been held in conjunction with the Summer Orientation Program which is conducted by the MAB.)

The opening session on Friday evening was highlighted by the President's report of the year's activities and accomplishments and a roundup of NFB Convention activities by our delegates.

Following a variety of business reports on Saturday morning, we heard from Kenneth Hopkins, member of the NFB Board of Directors and Director of the Idaho Commission for the Blind. The second speaker of the morning was Emil A. Honka, Administrator of the Montana Visual Services Division, Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services. Honka

stated that Montana is one of about three States whose program of services to the blind has not suffered as a result of reorganization. A legislative audit earlier this summer gave the Division a clean bill of health and no recommendations were made regarding fiscal matters. The Governor has asked all state agencies to keep their next year's budget requests at the same level as this year. With rapidly rising costs all up and down the line, Honka stated that this will mean a cut in service. However, he pledged that the legally blind will receive first consideration and that the physical restoration program will not be curtailed.

Charles Wright, Resource and Mobility Instructor, standing in for Principal Bob Deming of the State School for the Blind said that the new classroom building was ready for occupancy at the State School last January. There are about 25 visually handicapped children in residence at the school but several of these attend public school classes in downtown Great Falls. In addition, the school is responsible for another 85 to 90 pupils in public schools across the State. Beginning this fall, Mr. Wright will be stationed in Billings, working with children in the eastern portion of the State, while Mr. Fred Bischoff will be located in Missoula and serving children in the western area. A unit for the multihandicapped has been opened at Boulder and there are eight children enrolled in this program. (Boulder is the site of our State Training School.)

Later we heard a taped report from Budd Gould, who represents the visually handicapped on the State Library Commission Advisory Council. Among other things, Mr. Gould said that the Library for the Blind and Physically



Handicapped is now serving 2800 patrons, compared with 800 two years ago, and doing this with the same number of people on the staff. More help is desperately needed and they are also anxious to have a recording studio where special material can be reproduced. The Regional Library operates on a budget of about \$38,000 a year, of which only about \$10,000 is provided by State funds. The help of MAB members will be needed in securing additional funding for the library from the 1973 Legislature, Mr. Gould said.

We were especially interested in hearing from Kenneth Hopkins in regard to the Idaho Commission for the Blind, its new orientation center, etc.

More than 80 persons were on hand for the Saturday night banquet which was highlighted by an address by Kenneth Hopkins. Afterward, dancing at the Eagles Lodge completed a busy day.

Following the memorial service on Sunday morning, the final session was called to order. Election returns were announced and newly elected officers installed. (State officers are elected by a voting-by-mail procedure just prior to the annual convention.) Virginia Sutich, Sand Coulee, becomes our new second vice-president; district representatives Luella McVeda, Lewistown, and Charles Vanderzee, Bozeman, were re-elected. All nine chapters reported on their activities during the past year. Various items of business were transacted before adjournment at noon.

Throughout the weekend resolutions were introduced at appropriate moments and four of the five introduced were adopted. The first two called upon the

Visual Services Division to "employ rehabilitation Teacher-Counselors to provide adequate home teaching services at the earliest possible date," and "to locate all District offices of the Visual Services Division in relatively central areas which are readily accessible to both newly blinded and multihandicapped clients." The other two resolutions strongly urge the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress "to discontinue research and development on the multi-track, dual-speed playback machines," and "to include a system of periodic markings on the talking book records in such a way that a person can easily locate his place."

From start to finish there were frequent drawings for some fine door prizes, and as always, there was the fun of meeting old friends and making new ones. The Capital City Chapter did an excellent job in planning this year's convention and we are looking forward to next year's get together when our host affiliate will be the Great Falls Chapter.

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## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

by  
Berneice Johnson

[Editor's Note: These peanut bars are quite popular at Lions Conventions and State Fairs in Iowa.]

### PEANUT BARS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Make a Hot Milk Sponge Cake as follows:

4 eggs  
2 cups sugar

1 cup flour  
1 cup cake flour  
2 tsp. baking powder  
1 cup milk  
1 Tb. butter  
1 tsp. vanilla

Beat eggs four minutes; slowly add the sugar, and beat three minutes more. Sift flours together with baking powder, adding to egg and sugar mixture slowly. Beat for three minutes. The mixture will be quite thick. Heat milk and butter to the scalding point and let cool until warm. Add it to the thick mixture and beat three minutes. You will need to scrape the thick batter away from the edge of the bowl. While beating add the teaspoon of vanilla. Bake in a pan about nine by fifteen inches. Bake until the top of the cake is golden brown, about thirty to forty minutes. Cut this cake in pieces, the size you wish the bars to be. Frost with a mixture of:

1 pound powdered sugar  
¼ pound soft butter  
1 tsp. vanilla

add enough half and half cream to the frosting mixture to make it thin and creamy; frost each piece of cake and roll in ground salted peanuts. This will take about 26 ounces. I use redskin salted peanuts.

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## MONITOR MINIATURES

### SPECIAL NOTICE-- STATE STUDENT DIVISION

The officers of the NFB Student Division believe it is important to share information and news among various

groups through *The Monitor*. In this way student groups can learn about what other groups are doing and this method of communication can be a source of new ideas and activities. The officers of the NFB Student Division find it hard to know what is happening in other states when we receive no information about them and do not even know the names of the presidents.

Send to Mary Hartle, First Vice-President, NFB Student Division, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105 the following information: Names, addresses, phone numbers of affiliate student divisions. News of any current or proposed activities which can be shared through the pages of *The Monitor*. We can not write articles about you and your group unless you let us know what is happening.

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### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The National Federation of the Blind of Missouri, Inc. invites you to attend a seminar which will be held in Kansas City on Saturday, October 28 at the Continental Hotel, 11th and Baltimore. The subjects covered in the seminar will include the topics of "Leadership, Organization, Education, and Welfare for the Blind." The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and a dinner is scheduled to climax this event. The day's moderator will be Lawrence (Muzzy) Marcelino, Secretary of the National Federation of the Blind. James C. Coutts, second Vice-President of the NFB will also chair a panel discussion during the meeting. There is no charge for those attending the seminar and all blind persons are welcome.

For further information, please contact (Mrs. W.W.) Tiny Beedle, president of the NFB of Missouri, 342 Myrtle Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri 64124.

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Rosemary Varey writes: "Surely the most outstanding and prime highlight of our 1972 annual Convention, aside from President Jernigan's banquet address, was the amendment to our constitution so that the article dealing with our name now reads: "The name of this organization shall be known as *The National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota, Inc.* She also reported that two new chapters had joined the affiliate—the Arrowhead Chapter in Duluth and the Central Minnesota Chapter in St. Cloud. "We have, writes Mrs. Varey, "a very active and enthusiastic Student Division of approximately fifty-five members."

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A committee on the employment of the blind has been appointed by the St. Louis Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. It will be the function of this committee to find blind and partially sighted individuals seeking employment and discuss with them their qualifications, training abilities, and past job experience. Sufficient data on clients will be necessary before recommendations can be made. Contact with prospective employers will then be made to ascertain what positions may be open to these individuals that would best serve the company in question. Often lack of confidence is all that stands between an employer and a good worker. The formation of this committee of the blind and for the blind was deemed necessary to

assist the handicapped individual in the light of the great unemployment problems existing today. It is this group's intention to work hand-in-hand cooperatively with the already existing agencies for this purpose in the greater St. Louis area with the hope that this personal touch between client, agency and employer might bring about more fruitful results.

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Rep. Lester L. Wolff of New York introduced legislation in the House which provides for an additional itemized deduction for income-tax purposes for taxicab fares paid by disabled individuals. Citing the fact that some 22 million Americans live with a disabling condition severe enough to interfere with their daily activities, Wolff said he was introducing the measure "to eliminate one of the most unjust obstacles that the disabled have previously had to confront."

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Chairman Harrison A. Williams, Jr., of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare announced that the Committee approved his resolution calling for a White House Conference on the Handicapped. The resolution would authorize and urge the President to call such a conference and would authorize spending \$2 million to finance it. Williams stated that the conference would strengthen the Federal commitment to our handicapped citizens and help in designing programs to aid them in such areas as education, employment, health care, transportation, income maintenance, and others. "The call for a White House Conference on the Handicapped is a response to the call of the handicapped

themselves," Williams said. "They ask for recognition, for their rightful place in our Nation's life, and for a fair share of our resources. It is time that we provide them with that recognition and a forum with efficient visibility and national prominence so they are no longer a minority lost within this Nation." The resolution would also require that handicapped persons be employed on the Conference planning staff, as well as being delegates to the Conference itself.

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An 80-page booklet is being issued by the National Park Service as a guide for the physically handicapped, designed to help the blind, the deaf, the wheelchair-confined and others with physical impairments to enjoy the National Park system. It lists 242 areas for them. The Park Service is also building new facilities that easily accommodate the handicapped, and removing existing obstructions to full use of present facilities.

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At their State convention held in May, the NFB of Nebraska elected the following officers: Dick Parker, Omaha, president; Dave Wixon, Lincoln, first vice-president; Phil Scovell, Omaha, second vice-president; Verda Auen, Omaha, secretary; Richard Gulizia, Omaha, treasurer; board members—Larry Wallace, North Platte; Ralph Doud, Grand Island; Dick Zlab, and Stan Yank, both of Omaha.

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California's State Rehabilitation

Director, Robert E. Howard, hopes to improve the administration of the State's vocational rehabilitation services for the blind through a new program manager concept of administration. Howard outlined plans for the new system in a speech before the National Federation of the Blind of California in Sacramento. He said the program manager will be able to cut across other administrative lines in the department to give strong leadership and direction in the rehabilitation of the blind. To assist the program manager, the department is also establishing a field assistant manager for the blind in each of its four geographic regions. The administrator of the Orientation Center for the Blind in Albany will report directly to the program manager. The Department plans to start recruiting immediately on a nation-wide basis for the best possible persons to fill the position. Howard said he also plans to name a special seven member advisory committee relative to blind services. Organizations of the blind will be represented.

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*The Palmetto Auroran*, publication of the South Carolina Aurora Club of the Blind, reports that they sold more than 3,000 plates for the 19th annual chicken barbecue supper, held recently in Columbia. It was the second straight year the club had reached the magic figure of 3,000 plates. An all-time high profit of \$2,515.10 was realized as a result of this gigantic success. The first barbecue supper held in 1954 resulted in the sale of 200 plates with a net profit of \$100. Also, the Orangeburg Aurora Club of the Blind became the seventh chapter of the South Carolina NFB affiliate. Real progress, friends!

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The NFB of Maryland reports that House Bill 730, dealing with Unemployment Compensation for the blind and handicapped working in sheltered workshops, was passed and becomes effective July 1st. This will cost the Maryland Workshop for the Blind approximately \$7,500 per year. To be eligible, employees must work two consecutive quarters and make \$600 and be laid off. Incidentally, the Maryland Workshop for the Blind is the staunch ally of the NFB of Maryland in the efforts to establish a Commission for the Blind. The Shop and the Federation are gathering information from around the country and a status paper is being prepared based on these findings. It will then be placed before the Legislature.

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Senators Percy (of Illinois) and Humphrey (of Minnesota) recently introduced S. 3458 which would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in order to make discrimination because of physical or mental handicap in employment an unlawful employment practice, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation of that particular business enterprise.

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Sam Lentine, vice-president of the Niagara Chapter of the NFB of New York was recently honored by the Catholic War Veterans with their presentation to him of their God, Home, and Country Award. Warm congratulations, Sam!

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A 20-mile bike rally to raise scholarship funds for visually impaired students was held at the Liberal Arts campus of the Long Beach (California) City College. Participants included blind and visually impaired students who rode from the campus through East Long Beach to El Dorado Park and return. During the two-hour trip the cyclists passed seven checkpoints where poker cards stamped in Braille were picked up. The cyclists with the best poker hands were awarded prizes at the end of the rally. The rally was sponsored by the Long Beach City College Delta Beta Omega Chapter of the NFB of California. Open to the public with or without visual impairment, the rally included three bike categories: ten speed, other multiple-gear and conventional bicycles. Tandems were entered in respective gear categories.

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The Federal share of assistance payments for Aid to the Blind is 31/37 of the first \$37 of the average monthly payment per recipient, multiplied by the number of recipients, and from 50 to 65 percent (depending on the State's fiscal capacity as measured by per capita income) of that part of the State's average assistance payment that exceeds \$37. The maximum subject to Federal participation is \$75. However, in 1965 an optional formula for determining the Federal share of money payments was developed in those States operating medical assistance programs. This alternate method is simpler and potentially more generous than the older formula described above. Under the alternate method, the Federal share is computed by applying the "Federal medical assistance percentage" to the aggregate amount spent for money



payments, with no maximum. The "Federal medical assistance percentage" varies among the States from 50 to 83 percent, depending upon each State's per capita income. More and more States are finding it advantageous to elect the alternate method. As of July, 1971 some 29 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands were using the alternate method. Under this method, without any maximum on the Federal share, even the wealthiest States receive one-half of the amount they pay in assistance from the Federal Government.

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Custom made combination signature

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guide/identification cards are available for \$1.00 through Garnet J. Eide, 1922 West Washington Avenue, Iowa Falls, Iowa 50126. Name, address, social security number, medical information, etc. may be included as you choose. To order or for further details contact Mr. Eide.

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Roby C. Leonard, RFD 9, Box 524, Lexington, North Carolina, 27292 wishes to hear from any deaf-blind person who is self-employed and entitled to Social Security but whose claim was disallowed in a way indicating discrimination toward him.



